

July 4 tips for folks caring for people with Alzheimer's

July 1 2024, by Ernie Mundell



Big pops of noise and light are always a part of Independence Day

celebrations.

But the "rocket's red glare" (and bang) can be disorienting and upsetting for people struggling with [Alzheimer's](#).

An expert offers up four key tips for caregivers on how to make this July 4 easy on people with dementia.

"Celebrating Independence Day can still be a fun, enjoyable experience for families impacted by dementia-related illnesses by making the proper adaptations, such as being cautious about watching [fireworks](#) due to loud noises. It requires thoughtful planning to ensure their safety, comfort and enjoyment," said Jennifer Reeder, director of educational and [social services](#) at the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA).

"Being proactive, prepared and adaptable, and creating a safe space, are the best ways caregivers can create a dementia-friendly 4th of July for their loved ones."

Reeder's and the AFA's four tips for a calmer July 4:

1. Nix the fireworks. People with dementia are prone to what's known as sensory overload, the AFA explained. In the [worst-case scenario](#), the flash and boom of fireworks might even cause a person with dementia to wander away whenever fireworks are nearby. Some war veterans can even have flashbacks and imagine they are under fire or threatened by bombs.

Keeping a loved one with dementia inside, away from the din of fireworks, is strongly advised. Seeing a fireworks display via your TV might be a more manageable way to experience them, the AFA said.

2. Prepare for the 4th, and create a calm environment. If you know

that fireworks will be inevitable in your area, remind your loved one at [regular intervals](#) before and during the day that [loud noises](#) could occur. Setting up a white noise machine, an [air conditioner](#), or even music your loved one loves can help drown out firework noise and keeping them calm.

If your loved one has special "comfort items" (for example, a favorite blanket) make sure it's nearby. If your loved one with dementia lives alone, "consider asking a trusted relative or friend to stay with them, or hire a home caregiver for the night," the AFA said.

3. Keep gatherings small. Considering a July 4 backyard barbecue or other events? Keep it small, the AFA said. Big crowds tend to overwhelm and agitate a person with [dementia](#). Lunchtime gatherings are better than later in the day, when "sundowning" becomes an issue. Consider having guests wear name tags, to minimize your loved one's confusion when meeting people. And try as much as possible to keep the person's daily routine on track, the AFA said.

4. Get creative. Make the day festive and involve your loved one in those festivities. For example, "include creating patriotic decorations with your loved one, playing or singing familiar patriotic music, baking 4th of July -themed desserts or compiling a family album with pictures of past Independence Day memories," the AFA suggested. "Each of these activities can be cognitively stimulating and help your loved one express themselves creatively."

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